

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 00684 151652Z

63

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 ACDA-05 EB-07 ARA-06 SAJ-01 OMB-01

(ISO) W

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R 151555Z MAR 76

FM AMEMASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4078

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0684

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT AG

SUBJECT: FURTHER NOTES ON "APPEAL TO ALGERIAN PEOPLE"

REF: ALGIERS 0677

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, ONE OF FOREIGN JOURNALIST TO WHOM ALGERIAN OPPOSITIONIST BENYOUCEF BEN KHEDDA DELIVERED HIS "APPEAL TO ALGERIAN PEOPLE" MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. DURING APPROXIMATELY FIVE MINUTES THAT BEN KHEDDA WAS IN JOURNALIST'S OFFICE, HE SAID THAT REASON FOR APPEAL WAS REGIN'S PREPARATION FOR PROMULGATION OF NATIONAL CHARTER AND ELECTIONS. BEN KHEDDA INDICATED THAT THESE MOVES WOULD CONFIRM ALGERIA'S MOVE AWAY FROM DEMOCRACY AND COULD NOT THEREFORE BE ALLOWED TO GO UNCHALLENGED. CONTRADICTORY TO FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS, BEN KHEDDA SAID HE HAD DELIVERED APPEAL ONLY TO CERTAIN MINISTERS AND NOT TO COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION MEMBERS. BEN KHEDDA ALSO SAID, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, THAT HE AND ASSOCIATES ACTING ALONE.

B. POLICE OFFICIAL WHO VISITED JOURNALIST SHORTLY AFTER BEN KHEDDA DEPARTED MADE HIS PRESENTATION IN LOW, EVEN FRIENDLY KEY. OFFICIAL SAID THAT , WHEN HE

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PAGE 02 ALGIER 00684 151652Z

HAD LEARNED OF APPEAL, HE HAD COUNSELED MODERATION,

CONTENDING THAT SERIOUS JOURNALISTS WOULD NOT PUBLISH SUCH UNFOUNDED REPORT. (OFFICIAL MAY HAVE SAID THIS WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK. JOURNALIST HAD EVERY INTENTION OF PUBLISHING APPEAL AND REFRAINED FROM DOING SO ONLY ON DIRECT THREAT OF EXPULSION.) POLICE OFFICIAL SAID TOP LEVEL OF NATIONAL POLICE OVERRULED HIM AND SENT HIM TO GATHER UP ALL COPIES OF APPEAL IMMEDIATELY. OFFICIAL CONTENDED THAT BOTH FERHAT ABBAS AND CHEIKH KHEIREDDINE DENIED, UNDER INITIAL INTERROGATION, THAT THEY HAD SIGNED APPEAL AND FOURTH SIGNER, HOCINE LAHOUEL, CLAIMED HE HAD BEEN "MANIPULATED."

C. LAHOUEL WAS APPARENTLY DETAINED SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE BEN KHEDDA'S VISIT TO JOURNALIST'S OFFICE, INDICATING THAT POLICE ALREADY AWARE THAT SOME ACTIVITY AFOOT.

D. JOURNALIST BELIEVES THAT JEUNE AFRIQUE REPRESENTATIVE, WHO WAS EXPELLED FROM COUNTRY EARLY MARCH 10, BROKE STOP TO OUTSIDE WORLD. IT FIRST APPEARED, IN BRIEF FORM, IN FRENCH NEWSPAPER "LIBERATION" AND WAS THEN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY REUTERS AND AFP REPORTS FROM ALGIERS.

E. JOURNALIST'S CONCLUSION IS THAT BEN KHEDDA WAS NOT MAKING "ACT OF CONSCIENCE" APPEAL AS LAST, DESPERATION MOVE. JOURNALIST BELIEVES THAT RELEASE OF APPEAL PROBABLY PART OF WELL CONCEIVED PLAN WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO UNFOLD.

2. GOA HAS NOT REACTED FURTHER TO PUBLICATION OF APPEAL FOLLOWING OFFICIAL EDITORIAL MARCH 12. NO UNUSUAL ACTIVITY ON PART OF SECURITY FORCES NOTED OVER WEEKEND. REGIME SEEMED ENTIRELY PREOCCUPIED WITH FIDEL CASTRO'S VISIT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DOCUMENTS, OPPOSITION PARTIES, POLICE INVESTIGATIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ALGIER00684
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760098-0196
From: ALGIERS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760362/aaaacchs.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ALGIERS 677
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FURTHER NOTES ON "APPEAL TO ALGERIAN PEOPLE"
TAGS: PINS, PINT, AG, (BEN KHEDDA, BEN YOUSSEF)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006